

tokens in the coin payout tray **28** or other forms of payment, such as an amount printed on a ticket or credited to a credit card, debit card or smart card. Ticket printing and card reading machines (not illustrated) are known by and commercially available to those of skill in the art.

[0032] Gaming device **10** also includes one or more display devices. The embodiment shown in **FIG. 1A** includes a central display device **30**, and the alternative embodiment shown in **FIG. 1B** includes a central display device **30** as well as an upper display device **32**. The display device includes any viewing surface such as glass, a video monitor or screen, a liquid crystal display or any other static or dynamic display mechanism.

[0033] The slot machine base game of gaming device **10** of one embodiment displays a plurality of reels **34**, preferably three to five reels **34**, in video form on one or more of the display devices. Each reel **34** displays a plurality of indicia such as bells, hearts, fruits, numbers, letters, bars or other images or symbols which preferably correspond to a theme associated with the gaming device **10**. The display device displaying the video reels **34** is preferably a video monitor. Each gaming device **10** includes speakers **36** for making sounds or playing music as described below. The reels display standard gaming device symbols as well as one or more of the symbol stacks **72** and/or one or more of the rotating symbols as discussed in detail below.

[0034] Referring now to **FIG. 2**, a general electronic configuration of the gaming device **10** preferably includes: a processor or central processing unit ("CPU") **38**; a memory device **40** for storing program code or other data; a central display device **30**; an upper display device **32**; a sound card **42**; a plurality of speakers **36**; and one or more input devices **44**. The processor **38** is preferably a micro-processor or microcontroller-based platform which is capable of displaying images, symbols and other indicia such as images of people, characters, objects, places and things. The memory device **40** includes random access memory ("RAM") **46** for storing event data or other data generated or used during a particular game. The memory device **40** also includes read only memory ("ROM") **48** for storing program code, which controls the gaming device **10** so that it plays a particular game in accordance with applicable game rules and pay tables.

[0035] As illustrated in **FIG. 2**, the player preferably uses the input devices **44** to input signals into gaming device **10**. In the slot machine base game, the input devices **44** include the pull arm **18**, play button **20**, the bet one button **24** and the cash out button **26**. A touch screen **50** and touch screen controller **52** are connected to a video controller **54** and processor **38**. The terms "computer" or "controller" are used herein to refer collectively to the processor **38**, the memory device **40**, the sound card **42**, the touch screen controller and the video controller **54**.

[0036] In certain instances, it is preferable to use a touch screen **50** and an associated touch screen controller **52** instead of a conventional video monitor display device. The touch screen enables a player to input decisions into the gaming device **10** by sending a discrete signal based on the area of the touch screen **50** that the player touches or presses. As further illustrated in **FIG. 2**, the processor **38** connects to the coin slot **12** or payment acceptor **14**, whereby the processor **38** requires a player to deposit a certain amount of money in to start the game.

[0037] It should be appreciated that although a processor **38** and memory device **40** are preferable implementations of the present invention, the present invention also includes being implemented via one or more application-specific integrated circuits (ASIC's), one or more hard-wired devices, or one or more mechanical devices (collectively or alternatively referred to herein as a "processor"). Furthermore, although the processor **38** and memory device **40** preferably reside in each gaming device **10** unit, the present invention includes providing some or all of their functions at a central location such as a network server for communication to a playing station such as over a local area network (LAN), wide area network (WAN), Internet connection, microwave link, and the like.

[0038] With reference to the slot machine base game of **FIGS. 1A and 1B**, to operate the gaming device **10**, the player inserts the appropriate amount of tokens or money in the coin slot **12** or the payment acceptor **14** and then pulls the arm **18** or pushes the play button **20**. The reels **34** then begin to spin. Eventually, the reels **34** come to a stop. As long as the player has credits remaining, the player can spin the reels **34** again. Depending upon where the reels **34** stop, the player may or may not win additional credits.

[0039] In addition to winning base game credits, the gaming device **10**, may also include one or more bonus games that give players the opportunity to win credits. The gaming device **10** may employ a video-based display device **30** or **32** or a mechanical device (not shown) for the bonus games.

[0040] In the slot machine embodiment, the qualifying condition may include a particular symbol or symbol combination generated on a display device. As illustrated in the five reel slot game shown in **FIGS. 1A and 1B**, the qualifying condition includes the number seven appearing on, e.g., three adjacent reels **34** along a payline **56**. It should be appreciated that the gaming device may include one or more paylines, such as payline **56**, wherein the paylines can be horizontal, diagonal or any combination thereof. An alternative scatter pay qualifying condition includes the number seven appearing on, e.g., three adjacent reels **34** but not necessarily along a payline **56**, appearing on any different set of reels **34** three times or appearing anywhere on the display device the necessary number of times.

[0041] Referring now to **FIG. 3A**, the video display device **30** or **32** illustrates the reels **34**, wherein each reel includes a plurality of symbols **70**. One or more of the reels may also include one or more symbol stacks **72** and **82** as shown above in **FIGS. 1A and 1B**. For purposes of comparison, two symbol stacks **72** and **82** are illustrated. Any percentage of the displayed reel symbol positions or pay stops may be symbol stacks depending on the quantity provided on the reel strips and the random outcome of the spinning reels or reel strips. Each of the symbol stacks **72** and **82** includes an initially displayed symbol **74** and **84**, respectively, and a plurality of initially hidden symbols **76**, **78** and **80** and **86** and **88**, respectively.

[0042] The symbol stacks **72** and **82** each include a single initially displayed symbol **74** and **84**, respectively, and any number of initially hidden symbols. For example, the symbol stacks **72** and **82** may include only a single initially hidden symbol. Otherwise, as illustrated, the symbol stacks **72** and **82** can include any number of associated hidden